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ABSTRACT

Summarizing and synthesizing seven research studies which focus on the problem of the Alaska Native school dropout, this report describes each research project, identifies research findings, and presents recommendations. The seven studies are presented via consideration of: (1) the characteristics of the student who has dropped out of school; (2) the characteristics of the student who has remained in school; (3) the differences between the students who have and those who have not dropped out of school; (4) the reasons certain dropouts have returned to school; and (5) the attitudes of students toward the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) boarding schools. In view of the studies under consideration, this report also examines: (1) the limited future orientation of the dropout; (2) the negative self-concept of the dropout; (3) the effects of school-community-planning and coordination; and (4) the relationship between parents and the educational system. Among the major recommendations presented are: (1) re-examination of school curricula and counseling services; (2) development of village procedures to prepare prospective boarding school students for boarding school life; (3) development of a school oriented identification system which would report dropouts to the appropriate agencies; (4) development of a school oriented post dropout plan; and (5) development of a planning and coordinating system within the BIA offices. (JC)

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A PERSPECTIVE OF THE ALASKAN NATIVE
SCHOOL DROPOUT

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FOREWARD

This is a summary report of a series of research projects completed under a contract with the Social Services Division of the U.S. Department of Interior, Alaska Bureau of Indian Affairs, to study Alaskan native school dropouts and their needs. The objectives of the investigations were to consider the educational experiences of the Alaskan native along several dimensions. These included: characteristics of dropouts; factors associated with dropping out of school; factors associated with returning to school; and attitudes and perceptions of Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school students. This report presents a summary and synthesis of these studies.

The principal investigators were Dr. Kenneth A. Griffiths, Dr. O. William Farley, and Dr. Boyd E. Oviatt. Participating in the initial preparation of this report were Thomas D. Coleman, Marian Fife Darke, Linda Joy Dowhaniuk, Dennis A. Giles and Albert Mark Pooley, master's degree candidates in the Graduate School of Social Work, University of Utah. Full recognition is also given to the twenty-five students who participated in the collection of the original data. Their names are indicated in the reference section with the appropriate master's thesis citation.

Our liaison with the B.I.A., Mr. Gerald C. Ousterhout, Chief, Division of Social Services, Juneau, Alaska, made valuable suggestions both initially and during the course of the work.

While responsibility for the conclusions and recommendations of this report is fully accepted by the investigators, credit for the

final product is willingly shared with the numerous persons who gave generously of their time and resources.

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March, 1973

INTRODUCTION

The breadth and extensiveness of our continuing national interest in education is forcefully proclaimed in the following statement by President John F. Kennedy in his message on education to Congress on January 29, 1963:

Education is the keystone in the arch of freedom and progress. . . . For the individual, the doors to the school house, to the library, and to the college lead to the richest treasures of our open society; to the power of knowledge--to training and skills necessary for productive employment--to the wisdom, the ideals, and the culture which enrich life--and to the creative, self-disciplined understanding of society needed for good citizenship in today's changing and challenging world.

For the Nation, increasing the quality and availability of education is vital to both our national security and our domestic well-being. A free nation can rise no higher than the standard of excellence set in its schools and colleges. Ignorance and illiteracy, unskilled workers and school drop-outs--these and other failures of our educational system breed failures in our social and economic system: delinquency, unemployment, chronic dependence, a waste of human resources, a loss of productive power and purchasing power, and an increase in tax-supported benefits.

This ongoing concern for education has resulted in increasing educational attainments of the population of the United States. For example, in 1940, only 52 percent of the population 25 years of age and older had more than eight years of schooling; by 1950, 60 percent, and by 1960, 70 percent. The proportion of students completing high school has also increased significantly: only 33 percent of students enrolled in the ninth grade in 1925 graduated, while of the ninth graders in 1959, 70 percent graduated from high school (Weisbrod, 1965, p. 117).

Although there has been a growing educational achievement of the general population, there has been an accompanying concern for those

students who leave school before graduation. President John F. Kennedy, for example, pointedly referred to the school dropout as "a serious national problem."

The National Education Association has defined the dropout as a "pupil who leaves a school, for any reason except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies and without transferring to another school." On the basis of this definition it was estimated that the high school graduating class of 1969 had a dropout rate of 22 percent. (Kruger, 1969, p. 1).

The magnitude of the school dropout rate is significantly increased when consideration is given to the educational situation of selected minority groups. For example, the median level of education in Alaska in 1960 for the white population was 12.4 years. In sharp contrast, the level of education for the non-white population was eight years (Federal Field Committee, 1968, p. 8). The extent of the dropout rate of the Alaskan native is strikingly illustrated by the finding that in 1970, "only 27.4 percent of the non-white population of Alaska over twenty-five years of age had completed four years of high school." (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1970, p. 82).

Extensive consideration has been given in the literature to reasons for the dropout problem and in proposing possible solutions. In a provocative paper which deals with the benefits of dropout prevention, Weisbrod set forth various reasons for students leaving high school before graduation:

- (1) lack of information by students and parents; (2) preference patterns in which the psychic or consumption value of the types of school available is negative; (3) ability and motivational (preference) patterns such that specialized training such as vocational education would be

more suitable, but is unacceptable; (4) high marginal rates of time preference. (Weisbrod, 1965, p. 132).

Based upon an extensive review of related literature, Weisbron concludes that dropout prevention programs appear to attack the problem by informing students of the employment and other difficulties dropouts are likely to confront, and of the added opportunity they would have as graduates; by attempting to alter preference patterns; by providing more vocational education and work-study programs, thereby permitting a wider variety of choices for students; and, in the process of doing these, by trying to extend the time horizon of frequently impatient youth. (Weisbrod, 1965, p. 132).

Although there has been considerable research conducted and reported in the literature in the general area of the school dropout, little attention has been given to the Alaskan native student. This led the Social Services Division of the U.S. Department of Interior, Alaska Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Alaska State Department of Education, to encourage and support a series of research projects to study the Alaskan native dropout problem. These studies are the subject of this report.

PURPOSE

This report presents a summary and synthesis of the major findings of seven studies which were completed over a four-year period, and focused upon the problem of the Alaskan native* dropout. In addition, an

*The term "Alaskan native" was used to denote the Aleutian, Eskimo, Athapascan, Southeast Indian (including Tlingit and Haida), and the remaining Indian tribal groups living within the geographical boundaries of Alaska.

attempt was made to identify findings which had been noted across the majority of the studies and to formulate recommendations based upon these generalizations. It was hoped that the generalizations and recommendations growing out of the seven related studies would serve as a more sound and informed basis for the development of policies and programs, in contrast to the findings and conclusions of the individual studies.

It should be noted that a major problem encountered in formulating this report was the fact that the seven studies reviewed did not uniformly consider the same variables. This lack of uniform information made it difficult to arrive at generalizations that extended across each of the studies. Also, since the report is based upon reports prepared by individuals who were not always available to the present authors, an attempt was made to minimize the formulation of conclusions that were not specifically warranted by the data presented. These factors, however, must be considered as possible limitations of this report.

Of the seven studies considered in this report, six were completed under the auspices of the Graduate School of Social Work, University of Utah. The one additional study included, which was done in consultation with the University of Utah, was completed by Ms. Sally Roulston, Alaska Department of Education, Juneau, Alaska. The studies examined the Alaskan native school dropout and the educational system of Alaska along various dimensions. Consideration was given in the studies to the identification of general characteristics of the student who dropped out of school, the characteristics of the student who remained in school, differences in characteristics of the dropout and the student who had never dropped out of school, why certain dropouts returned to school, and the attitudes

of students regarding Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools. The seven studies by author and title were as follows:

- Atchison, Shirley Ruth, et al. "Alaskan Native B.I.A. Boarding School Students; A Comparison of the Characteristics of 93 Persistors, 1970-71, and Dropouts, 1969-70." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Graduate School of Social Work, University of Utah, June 1972.
- Beall, Sandra, et al. "Return of the Dropout: A Study of Alaskan Native Dropouts Who Return to School." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Graduate School of Social Work, University of Utah, June 1972.
- Brown, Eddie Frank, et al. "A Comparative Study of the Alaskan Native Adolescent and Young Adult Secondary School Dropouts." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Graduate School of Social Work, University of Utah, June 1972.
- Elias, David William, et al. "A Comparison of the Characteristics of 259 Alaskan Native Students Who Dropped Out of School During the Academic Year 1969-70." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Graduate School of Social Work, University of Utah, June 1971.
- Hanks, Gary Arlin. "Dependency Among Alaskan Native School Dropouts: A Synthesis of Some Alaskan School Dropout Studies During the Academic Year 1970-71." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Graduate School of Social Work, University of Utah, June 1972.
- Hatch, William Eaton, et al. "A Comparison of the Characteristics of 332 Alaskan Native Students Who Dropped Out of School During the Academic Year 1970-71." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Graduate School of Social Work, University of Utah, June 1972.
- Roulston, Sally. "Survey of Attitudes and Perceptions Alaska BIA Boarding School Students." Division of Education, Alaska, June 1971. (Mimeographed)

ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

The remainder of the report will be organized as follows: First, a summary of the findings of the seven studies will be presented; second, conclusions and recommendations concerning the personal characteristics of the dropout will be set forth; third, consideration will be given to

the limited future orientation of the dropout; the negative self-concept of the dropout will then be discussed; fifth, school-community planning and coordination will be considered; sixth, parental relations with the educational process will be reviewed; finally, a concluding summary will be formulated.

SUMMARY OF STUDIES

Introduction

The seven research studies reviewed in this report considered the educational experiences of the Alaskan native along several related dimensions. The first study of an ongoing series dealt with a population of 415 students who had been identified as having dropped out of school in 1969 (259 of this population were interviewed). Using the data obtained from this original study of 259 dropouts, two additional projects were undertaken which examined these data along different dimensions--one considered the data from the variable of dependency; another, from the dimension of the age of the dropout.

Utilizing the same 259 population as specified above, one year later another study sought to conduct a follow-up interview with these students and to determine their present educational status (130 were actually interviewed).

A population of 772 students who had dropped out of school in 1970 were the subjects of another study--332 of this population were located and interviewed. This study was intended as a replication of the initial 1969 study.

The characteristics of school dropouts were compared with those of students who had never dropped out of school, in a study completed in 1971.

Although not directly related to the problem of the dropout, a related study which surveyed the attitudes and perceptions of 909 Alaska B.I.A. boarding school students was included in this review.

The following summarization of these studies will include the purpose of the study, the study population, and the major findings. The studies will be identified by the first author and the title.

Elias, David William et al. "A Comparison of 259 Alaska Native Students Who Had Dropped Out of School During the Academic Year 1969-1970."

The study population included 415 Alaska native students who left school during the 1969-70 school year. A total of 259 dropouts were located and interviewed. The purpose of this study was to determine characteristics and attitudes of the Alaska native student dropout, focusing on the following questions: (1) What factors influenced dropping out of school?; (2) What had the student been doing since leaving school?; (3) What would the student like to be doing and what were his future educational plans?; (4) What social services had the student received from the various social service agencies since leaving school?

In terms of general characteristics of the dropouts interviewed, 46.9 percent were Eskimo; 21.2 percent Southeastern Indian (Tlingit, Haida); 19.6 percent Interior Indian (Athapaskan); and 5.8 percent Aleut. The dropout was equally as likely to be male as female; was approximately 17.5 years old, and had 6.4 brothers and sisters. Over 50 percent came from villages with a population of less than 500; were single as opposed to married; had lived most of their lives with both natural parents; were attending either ninth or tenth grade at the time they left school; had been arrested one or more times; were planning to return to school;

had a brother or sister who also dropped out of school; and, had not been contacted or helped by any social agency since leaving school.

In comparing students who had attended B.I.A. boarding schools with those who had attended public schools, "family factors" were identified as more frequently influencing a student's decision to leave school for those students who were enrolled in public school. Public school respondents indicated another significant factor in their decision to leave school was "trouble with other students." The decision to leave school in both school systems, however, was significantly influenced by "problems with people," either family or other students.

The reasons given for leaving school were varied. "Not liking school" was mentioned by 19.2 percent of the respondents. In generalizing upon the reasons for leaving school, the researchers suggested that several students had quit school as a solution to an immediate problem. This conclusion was based upon the high percentage of dropouts who left school without a specific goal in mind.

Since leaving school, only 33 percent of those interviewed had engaged in activities which they believed had a specific reference to a future goal. Finding employment was not a major initial reason for leaving school.

Of significance was the finding that if given the opportunity, over one-half of the students would return to school. The dropouts indicated that 25 percent had been in contact with and had received help from the Neighborhood Youth Corps, 16.2 percent had received help from the B.I.A. and 11.2 percent had received help from the Alaskan Department of Welfare. Of significance was the finding that over 50 percent of the dropouts had had no contact with a helping source.

If the respondents were to return to school, 45.7 percent would choose a B.I.A. school either inside or outside Alaska; 41.2 percent would choose a public school inside or outside Alaska; and, 5.8 percent would choose a "church" school inside or outside Alaska.

Dropouts from communities of over 500 in population had a higher rate of arrest than those from communities under 500 in population.

Hanks, Gary Arlin. "Dependency Among Alaskan Native School Dropouts."

This study was a synthesis of three studies completed during 1968 through 1971 (Elias, 1971), (Smail, 1968), (Atchison, 1972). An attempt was made in this study to answer the following questions: (1) How does parental influence affect the student dropping out? (2) How is the dropout dependent?; (3) How does dependency affect the student dropping out?; and, (4) Is dependency a major reason why Alaskan natives discontinue school?

Three major conclusions were identified in this study, as follows:

- I. A major portion of the Alaskan native dropouts may occur because of a dependency upon parents.

The native dropout living with both real parents more frequently reported that being needed at home contributed to dropping out of school; more native dropouts living with both real parents felt that being a native held them back; homesickness was reported more by dropouts living with both real parents; more native dropouts wanted help from their parents and more orientation than the non-natives; and, more dropouts felt they had permissive parents.

- II. The native Alaskan may be struggling for independence of parental control.

Students who had not dropped out of school readily admitted to family problems, whereas, dropouts did not; dropouts had a stronger resentment toward control; more natives, in comparison to non-natives, try to suppress their feelings; dropouts had a stronger resentment toward control.

- III. The reason Alaskan native students dropout of school may be due more to dependency than a dislike for school.

Parents were noted as feeling a loss of cultural and parental identity due to the dependency on the government schools. Family ties, cultural ties, homesickness and low self-image, were reported as indicating that the parents helped to foster dependency. Being needed at home was felt by native dropouts who lived with both real parents to be a contributing factor to their discontinuing school. More persistors, as compared to dropouts, had a sense of direction as to their future plans.

Brown, Eddie Frank, et al. "A Comparative Study of Alaskan Native Adolescent and Young Adult Secondary School Dropouts."

The purpose of this study was to compare similarities and differences between two age groups--dropouts 17 years of age and younger, and those 18 years of age and older. The study population was the 259 students interviewed in the Elias study. (Elias, 1971)

Of the 259 dropouts, 129 were 17 years of age or younger, and 128 were 18 years of age or older (two students from the original population were excluded from the analysis).

The general finding of this study was that age did not appear to be a significant variable in differentiating students along various dimensions. The adolescent and young adult dropouts were equally as likely to be male as female; were single as opposed to married; had previously dropped out of school at least one time; and, were equally planning to return to school. A variety of reasons for leaving school were given by both groups, with poor grades being mentioned as the most frequent reason.

A large percentage of the families of both the adolescent and young adult dropout were characterized by factors which would point toward instability in basic family relationships. The homes of both groups showed the following characteristics: lived with other than both real parents most of life (adolescent, 40.3 percent; young adult, 29.7 percent); do not now live with both real parents (adolescent, 60.5 percent, and young adult 57.8 percent); brothers or sisters who left school before graduating (adolescent, 56.6 percent, and young adult 59.4 percent).

There were, however, some areas in which age was found to be a differentiating factor. Significantly more young adults (73.4 percent) than adolescents (50.4 percent) came from a village with a population of less than 1,000. More young adults (68 percent) than adolescents (52 percent) were Eskimo; and, more young adults (16.5 percent) than adolescents (2.3 percent) were planning on attending vocational school instead of a regular school.

The study also examined the area of the self-concept of the student in relation to the age differential. Self-concept was explored through a series of questions which explored the student's feelings toward himself

and his environment. Of the series of statements, only one was found to be significantly different for the two age groups. This statement was, "If I set my mind to it, I can do anything I want." The findings showed that 110 (85.9 percent) of the young adult group agreed to the statement, as compared to 91 (70.5 percent) of the adolescents. The authors suggest that this finding is in the opposite direction of that expected. That is, they postulate that the greater number of failures experienced by older adolescents would tend to result in a lower self-concept. It would seem important to note that, although the younger age group more frequently disagreed with the statement, in examining the overall findings, the majority of the students from both age groups reported that if they set their mind to it, they could do anything they wanted.

Beall, Sandra, et al. "Return of the Dropout: A Study of Alaskan Native Dropouts Who Return to School."

This study sought to examine and evaluate the current situation of the 259 dropouts who had been identified in the Elias study (1971). Following a time interval of one year, the researchers sought to individually contact the 259 students and to: (1) identify those students who had returned to school; and, (2) ascertain those factors associated with students who returned to school, and those students who had not returned to school.

From the initial population of 259, 130 were interviewed for the follow-up study. Of the 130 students who were interviewed, seventy-five had re-entered school and fifty-five had not.

From among the several dimensions examined, very few differences were found between returnees and non-returnees. This was reported as a

significant finding in and of itself. Both groups were noted as having had many factors in common.

In regard to identifying information, it was found that by far fewer dropouts were married, but once married they were significantly less likely to return to school. Also statistically significant was the high probability of those who had left school more than once, to return to school. For many Alaskan natives there was a repetitive pattern of leaving school and re-entering.

In considering factors associated with leaving school, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups; however, there were two trends. First, fewer returnees felt poor grades contributed to their leaving school. Secondly, fewer returnees felt their not liking school was a contributing factor.

Regarding their activities since leaving school, there were not significant differences between returnees and non-returnees. Most of those interviewed in both groups were "helping at home."

Two significant differences were noted in considering factors associated with the decision to return to school. First, significantly more returnees had talked with someone about their future plans. In addition, more returnees felt the initial interview they had experienced as a part of the Elias study had helped them to "get back into school." In addition to the above findings, some trends were notable. More returnees had talked with someone about future plans; more returnees had had a positive experience with the Neighborhood Youth Corp; more returnees felt greater participation in school activities would have helped them stay in school; and, both groups agreed that greater financial assistance and working part time, smaller classes, more individualized instruction,

and availability of more trades to study, would have influenced their decision to return to school.

In reporting on their plans for the future, significantly more of the returnees thought that "to help other people" was important in their future job planning. A trend was also noted for more returnees to feel "having people do what they say" was a factor in future job consideration.

Hatch, William Eaton, et al. "Alaskan Native Dropouts: Characteristics of 332 Alaskan Native Students Who Dropped Out of School During the Academic Year 1970-71."

This study, completed in 1970-71, was basically intended as a replication of the Elias study which had been completed in 1969-1970. The primary purpose of the study was to provide a "test of reliability on the 1969-1970 study."

A total of 722 native students were reported to have left school during 1970-71 for reasons other than direct transfer. The researchers attempted to interview every dropout, and they were successful in interviewing 332 students, which was 46 percent of the total population.

Statistical analysis of the two studies showed significant differences in a number of areas; however, the limited extent of the differences were such as to lead the researchers to conclude that a "degree of reliability has been achieved in the research."

Comparison of the two studies showed a significant difference in the population samples with fewer Southeast Indians being included in the 1970 population. This was considered to be partially explained by the smaller percentage of contacts made in the Juneau area.

Another area of significant difference was the type of school being attended at the time of the dropout's decision to leave school. It was found that a significantly greater number had enrolled in boarding programs over the previous year. This significant difference was found by grouping students who attended B.I.A. boarding schools, state boarding home programs, and state boarding schools. Another significant difference was found in the declining number of students attending public schools. Part of this shift was considered as being attributed to the growth in the Boarding Home Program which had enrolled 868 during the 1970-71 school year, a significant increase over the 565 of the previous year. It was also pointed out that the population was composed of a significantly fewer number of Southeast Indians, who have a smaller proportionate attendance in schools away from their home villages.

A significant difference was also observed in responses to the question asking students what their preference would be if they could choose again what type of school they would attend. More students in the 1970 population preferred B.I.A. schools inside Alaska. It was postulated that this finding might be explained by the population shift which included fewer Southeast Indians and greater percentages of other Alaskan natives. Also, availability of local public school facilities was greater in the Southeastern areas of the state.

Another difference was noted in the students' plans for the next year. When asked what definite plans had been made for the coming year, the dropouts' first choice showed fewer planning to return to a regular school program in the 1970 group. The students' second choice showed a marked increase in plans to return to a regular school program. It was

concluded that the two changes in findings were correlated and that a significant group had made returning to a regular school program their second alternative.

A change was also noted in agency involvement. In 1970, the dropouts reported significantly less contact by the B.I.A. The Manpower Center showed a significantly increased involvement, with a decrease in the number of dropouts reporting having had no contact with the agency. Vocational rehabilitation was also found to have had a significantly increased involvement.

In response to a series of questions asking what was presently holding them back from doing what they would like to do for a living, a significant difference was observed in the question asking if training needed for jobs was a factor. Of the 1969 population, 48.5 percent reported training as a factor, as compared to a 38.9 percent in the 1970 population. It was concluded that the increased unemployment was not seen as a direct result of the need for increased training.

Finally, an interesting difference was observed in the number of students who reported that they would like to talk to someone further about their future plans. The dropouts from the 1970 population were significantly more interested in becoming involved with someone who could help them plan their future. This finding was considered to be explained partially by the change made in the administration of the research interview. Although the instrument was given in the same standardized manner, there had been an effort made by the researchers to take opportunity to provide any possible service. This often resulted in extended interview sessions and numerous referrals for further service.

Atchison, Shirley Ruth, et al. "Alaskan Native B.I.A. Boarding School Students: A Comparison of the Characteristics of 93 Persistors, 1970-71, and Dropouts, 1969-1970."

This study sought to compare the characteristics of 93 Alaskan native school persistors with 48 Alaskan native dropouts from Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools. The primary purpose was to determine factors which contributed to native students' dropping out of, or persisting in school. The study focused upon the following areas: major characteristics; factors causing difficulty in school; future orientation; services received from social agencies; choice of occupation; and, feelings concerning personal self-determination, the value of education, and towards the future.

Persistors and dropouts in B.I.A. boarding schools were found to be similar in age, sex, marital status, race and family structure.

Significantly more persistors than dropouts appeared to come from families in which education was of some value. Difficulty in the elementary grades was also found to have posed a problem for significantly more dropouts than persistors.

Students who dropped out of school did so predominantly in the ninth and tenth grades, with the rate of dropout similar for each month during the school year. Students who had persisted in school reported that May was their most difficult month in the school year.

The dropouts were more frequently unable to indicate specifically the kinds of difficulty they had in school, other than that they did not like school. The high degree of lack of mention of problems with teachers, students and at their residences, may have indicated more difficulty in adjustment than appeared on the surface.

Interestingly, persistors more frequently reported "poor grades" as posing the greatest difficulty during the school year. The researchers suggested that students who persisted in school may have felt more secure than the dropouts and therefore more realistically expressed a concern about their grades and the effect these might have on their education and graduation. However, when questioned specifically about grades, significantly more dropouts than persistors reported that their grades were not passing and that they ranked below average when comparing their overall ability with that of their classmates.

Being a native was perceived by significantly more dropouts than persistors as holding them back from doing what they would like to do for a living. However, it should be noted that the majority of students in both populations reported that being a native did not hold them back from doing what they would like to do for a living.

More dropouts indicated they had no definite plans for the future, and they were not occupied in any future oriented activity. Further, the dropout more frequently agreed to the statement, "What I do has little effect on what happens to me."

The findings pointed to a general limitation in the social service delivery system for youth. It was found, for example, that more than 80 percent of the persistors and dropouts alike reported that they had received no help from social agencies. However, significantly more persistors than dropouts reported that they had received "much help" from the B.I.A. This later finding would appear to be quite significant for future planning of social services.

Roulston, Sally. "Survey of Attitudes and Perceptions of Alaska B.I.A. Boarding School Students, June 1971."

The purpose of this study was to determine the likes and dislikes, and attitudes of the B.I.A. Boarding School students from Alaska. A questionnaire was sent to 909 students who were enrolled at Chcmawa Indian School; Chilocco Indian School; Mt. Edgecumbe Boarding School; and Wrangell Institute. Returns were received from 558 students, representing 61 percent of the student population.

The findings indicated that 94 percent of the students enrolled in 1970-1971 intended to return to school. This was in contrast to a 1958 study which reported that only 22 percent of a similar group of students planned to return to school. Approximately 13 percent of the students felt they could not complete their high school education. The largest single reason being "needed at home."

There was a general perceived adequacy of the educational program, facilities, staff, courses and grade placement.

An estimated 88 percent intended to graduate from high school, 28 percent aspired to attend college, and 14 percent intended to go to a vocational school. A high percentage of students indicated they had no definite plans after graduation (26 percent of the male and 33 percent of the female population).

Of the total sample, 29 percent felt a degree of teacher prejudice. There was no overwhelming evidence that students want to move in the direction of total native domination of the educational process. They did indicate a desire for more native culture and history in the curriculum, but they were not adamant about having native teachers.

There was evidence that intra-native-group conflicts caused problems in the schools (33 percent felt it caused quite a few problems).

Given a choice, approximately two-thirds (67 percent) of the students wanted to go to school in Alaska. It was concluded that presumably, because of the lack of the educational opportunities in Alaska, many students have had to be placed in situations that would not have been their first choice.

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The extensive and varied findings of the research reports reviewed provide ample testimony of the complexity of the dropout problem. Further, it is evident to even the most casual observer that there is no sole cause which can be identified. Therefore, we must guard against any tendency to see the cause and prevention of the dropout problem within a narrow framework.

Although this section focuses upon only five general areas of the dropout problem, this seemingly "limited focus" should not be interpreted as inferring a narrow conceptualization of the problem. As noted previously, this report sought to identify findings and to formulate generalizations that extended across the majority of the seven studies. Consequently, this section will not examine each of the many dimensions of the problem which were identified in the separate studies. Consideration will be given to those areas which were judged to be supported by findings from the majority of the studies.

We will first focus upon the personal characteristics of the dropout. The negative self-concept and the lack of orientation toward

the future manifested by the dropout will then be considered. The concluding sections will examine school-community and school-parent relations.

Personal Characteristics

It has usually been the case that efforts which seek to establish a direct cause and effect relationship between human behavior and a given personal characteristic have experienced very limited success. Such was also the case in this investigation. In the study (Atchison) which dealt with a comparison of dropouts and persistors, the students in both groups were similar in age, sex, marital status, race and family composition. Similarly, a comparison of those students who had dropped out of school and subsequently returned, with those who had not returned, revealed a difference in only one area--marital status. It was found that the married person was significantly less likely to return to school. Although the significant finding from these data is that there does not appear to be any given set of differentiating personal characteristics, there are a number of findings which appear worthy of comment.

The personal characteristics of the 259 students of the Elias study and the 337 students of the Hatch study were generally similar. The uniformity of the findings across both studies would tend to lend support to the validity of the characterization of the Alaskan native dropout as: equally as likely to be male as female; approximately 17 years of age; had six brothers and sisters; single, had lived most of his life with both natural parents; came from a village of less than 500; was a sophomore or junior; had a brother or sister who had also dropped out of school.

The race of the student dropout was consistently the same across the studies. With one exception, the proportion of the race of students represented in the dropout population was also similar to that found in the general native population of Alaska. The exception was in the Aleut population, which made up approximately seven percent of the dropout population; whereas, 14 percent of the Alaskan native population were Aleut, according to U.S. Census data, 1960. We have no explanation to offer for this finding, other than that of possible interview completion bias due to the greater geographical inaccessibility of this student group.

One might logically wonder as to whether or not there is significance to the finding that 17 is the crucial period for dropping out of school. For example, this could be that developmental period in which the young adult is dealing more directly with the cultural and value conflicts presented within the context of making plans for the future. If such were the case, what would be the implications for preventing school dropouts? In a study dealing with the costs and benefits of dropout prevention (Weisbrod, 1965, p. 147) it was suggested that "any program which does not cope with the dropout hazard before students are 16 years old may be too late." Weisbrod goes on to conclude that "unless more efficient methods can be devised for dealing at the high school level with dropouts . . . we ought very probably to place greater reliance on other programs--programs that could be devised for younger students or that would concentrate on ameliorating the problem of dropouts (for example, by attracting them into night-school courses) rather than only on preventing the act of leaving school." (Weisbrod, 1965, p. 148)

In a discussion of the Weisbrod report, Fritz Machlup, of Princeton, proposes a rather unique approach to dealing with the problem of most dropouts occurring between ages 16 and 18. (Weisbrod, 1965, p. 154) He concludes that the problem is serious because there is still a lot to be learned in the eleventh and twelfth grades of high school. His solution is simple and direct; the curriculum of primary and secondary schools should be compressed and concentrated to that students who drop out of school at age 16 will have already learned what they are now permitted to learn by age 18. Machlup anticipates the argument that dropouts would want to avoid the last two years of school, no matter their age, by concluding that since he believes the dropout age is related to physiological maturity, there is limited danger of a large number of students dropping out of school before they are 15 years of age.

Whether or not one accepts Machlup's proposal is perhaps dependent, in part, upon acceptance or rejection of his relating the dropout age to physiological maturity. In rebuttal to this thesis, it could perhaps be as logically argued that the dropout problem may be symptomatic of a school problem which could be solved by changes in the school programs. The answer most probably would encompass both of the above dimensions. Until more definitive information is available from innovative dropout prevention programs, schools would appear to be justified in making sure that the 15 and 16 year old student is informed about difficulties a dropout may be likely to confront and providing a wider variety of curriculum choices for students.

Self-Concept

The self-concept is a basic frame of reference through which the individual perceives and interacts with the world; therefore, it is a

powerful influence on human behavior. The importance of the self-concept and rehabilitation (Fitts, 1972, p. 9) which reported that it is a significant factor in both vocational choice and in the preparation and the performance of the young people of our society. For example, evidence is cited which indicated that self-concept is higher for students who have made a clear vocational choice than for those who have not.

The self-concept of the Alaskan native dropout was examined by posing a series of questions which related to perceptions of self and influence and control of the future. It was found that over 50 percent of the dropouts agreed with the statement "what I do has little effect on what happens to me." In contrast, only 31 percent of the persistors agreed with this statement. Similarly, "being a native" was perceived by significantly more dropouts than persistors as holding them back from doing what they would like to do for a living.

How does a person develop a self-concept and what is required to change it? In a definitive work on "self-esteem," Coopersmith sets forth a theoretical framework intended to answer the question as to what are the conditions that lead an individual to value him as an object of self-worth. (Coopersmith, 1965, p. 242) The determining variables of self-esteem are subsumed under the concepts of successes, values, aspirations and defenses. According to this formulation, the process of self-judgment derives from a subjective judgment of success, with that appraisal weighted according to the value placed upon different areas of capacity and performance, measured against a person's personal goals and standards and filtered through his capacity to defend himself against presumed or actual occurrences of failure.

What specifically enables a person to develop a more positive view of his identity? Fitts (1971, p. 98) found that "persons with a high frequency of positive experiences were more likely to have a positive self-concept." Although the findings cited are not conclusive as to which was the antecedent variable, the interrelationship of positive experience and positive self-concept would appear to be such as to justify consideration in prevention of school dropouts. Additional factors worthy of consideration in such an effort would be the provision of learning experiences commensurate with a student's abilities, and provision of meaningful opportunities for direct involvement in planning programs and activities that directly affect a student's life. In reference to the latter point, Leon sees the only alternative to be the transfer of power from the white to the Indian when he states, "The agency must consciously and deliberately reverse the authority pattern . . . thereby to create a process which involves the Indian throughout in determining his own fate." (Leon, 1965, p. 727; 1968, p. 256)

The inclusion in the educational experience of native history, culture, past and present values, so that the child learns about his people, is also proffered as a means of helping him to come to see his own worth and dignity. While recognizing the validity of this approach, Spilka identifies its limitations when he states, "There is the implication in some of the writings supportive of this approach that the teaching of Indian heritage will right all wrongs and build the spirit and self-confidence of Indian students to such an extent that low educational performance and failure to continue school will no longer be significant problems . . . they must be regarded as only one meaningful item in the educational armamentarium." (Spilka, 1970, p. 403)

The presence in the school of Alaskan native faculty could also provide the student with an opportunity for modeling his behavior after an effective, assured and competent individual. This could serve to enhance the perceptions of self-worth of the student, while at the same time lending reinforcement to the value of education.

In summary, it is proposed that efforts directed towards the enhancement of self-perceptions of the Alaskan native students may be instrumental in deterring him from leaving school prematurely. Promising approaches to developing a more positive self-image appear to include the following: positive and rewarding experiences; involvement in planning programs and activities; school expectations that are in keeping with abilities; teaching of the Alaskan native heritage in the curriculum; and, the provision within the school of effective native teachers to serve as role models.

Future Orientation

Relative to what might be considered as a perception by Indians as being powerless, Riggs points out that the Indian child ". . . is living in two different worlds. One is reality, the other is not . . . school. . . is not reality. The reality is the way he, his parents, relatives and friends live, and this is what he associated with real life; the school world is just a world of intangibility." (Riggs, 1968, p. 19)

The findings of the Alaskan native dropout studies in reference to the extent to which students had an orientation towards the future are quite interesting. School persistors, in comparison with dropouts, consistently manifested a greater sense of direction toward the future and more frequently expressed "definite future plans." It is not possible

from available data to determine if the lack of definite plans reported by dropouts was a factor in the decision to leave school, or, if it is related to a sense of lack of direction resulting from having left school. However, the findings do strongly point to the need for schools and "helping agencies" to critically examine the extent to which students are being assisted in exploring occupational choices, and are being prepared for different types of work. Also, if as some suggest, the primary role of the school is to prepare the Indian for employment in the dominant white economy, to be successful, there must also be concomitant consideration given to the realities of access by the Indian to employment. What kind of education do Alaskan natives want? What kind of education prepares the native for employment in the dominant economy? What kind of education prepares the native to return to the small village?

Havighurst stresses the role of education in preparing Indians for careers at all levels and in helping the individual to see the transferability of school to an occupation. He states, "although schools play a small role in providing employment, they can maximize preparation for careers at all levels--manual worker, technician, business, or professional. Career development plans should give students a chance to explore different types of work, to see the various possibilities in the local area and the neighboring cities, and to become aware of their own personal abilities and interests as they are related to choice of occupation." (Havighurst, 1970, p. 33)

In light of the findings presented and the preceding discussion, it is recommended that schools give serious consideration to programs for career development. Counseling should be made available to assist students with obtaining vocational information. In addition, manpower training programs which employ students in positions in schools they are attending

should be continued and developed. This could serve to add meaning to the lives of some, prepare others for long-term careers, and provide for all an opportunity for involvement in a "real life" work experience.

School-Community Planning and Coordination

The majority of the Alaskan native school dropouts interviewed reported they had not been contacted for help by any social service agency since leaving school. Should provisions be made for contacting a dropout to encourage his return to school? Would the returns be worth the time-money investment required? The research findings suggest answers to these questions and a possible recommended course of action.

Although the majority of both dropouts and persistors reported they had received no help from social service agencies, of those who had received help, a significantly greater number were persistors. Also, in comparing those students who had dropped out and subsequently returned to school, with those who had not returned to school, it was found that since leaving school, significantly more school returnees had talked with someone about their future plans. Further, the returnees reported that the interview with the researcher at the time of the initial dropout study in 1969 had helped them get back into school. Thus, it would appear that a rather minimal "helping" effort in the form of a research interview which had explored the students current situation was a determining factor in the decision of a student to return to school. (It should be noted that the study did not determine the length of time the returnees remained in school.)

The school cannot live in isolation from the community it serves-- it must be open to continuous inflow from the community, while at the same

time providing for a continuous outflow to the community. In reference to the dropout problem, the ultimate goal is, of course, the prevention of a student dropping out of school. However, until this goal is achieved, consideration must be given to the plight of the student who has prematurely left school. One possible direction is for the development of a system of coordination and supportive interaction among existing health and welfare agencies.

The Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Bureau of Indian Affairs were the agencies mentioned most frequently by dropouts as sources of help. There was no indication, however, of a systematic plan for following up with dropouts after they had left school. (It should be noted that these findings are based upon reports by students.)

A personal interview with Mr. Gerald C. Ousterhout, Chief, Division of Social Services, Juneau, Alaska, on February 7, 1973, and observations from discussions with several B.I.A. administrative personnel, were helpful in identifying possible planning problems and needs. At the area level of the B.I.A. (in this instance, Alaska) there are three major divisions-- Education, Community Services, and Administration. The Division of Education has primary responsibility for academic planning. Positions for social workers at the division level are provided for; however, it was reported that they have not been filled by the Division of Education.

The Division of Administration has responsibility for personnel, property and supply, physical plant development and budgeting. The Division of Community Services comprises ten separate divisions, including social services, employment assistance (which includes adult vocational training), and economic development.

The inter-relationship of the services of the three divisions at the area level appear quite evident. However, it was reported that perhaps the divisions are not presently functioning in a coordinated fashion. That is to say, although the programs of the Divisions of Education, Administration and Community Services are inter-related, coordination of the planning of related activities among the divisions is quite limited. If this is in fact the case, it would appear essential for the B.I.A. to devise a means of providing for coordination of planning among related areas. For example, in the area of the school dropout problem, it would seem quite essential for the Divisions of Education, Social Services and Adult Vocational Training to coordinate the planning and implementation of their activities.

It would appear that resources are available to assist the school dropout which are not presently being utilized. Procedures should be established which provide for the identification of available helping resources, together with the development of a system which would enable the designation of those resources appropriate to assist a specific dropout and his family. Plans could be formulated, for example, which would provide for employing Alaskan native college students during the summer months to individually contact students who had been identified as having dropped out of school.

Fixing responsibility for the planning and coordination of a systematic community approach to the dropout problem is a difficult problem. The writers have perhaps already extended themselves far beyond what discretion would dictate in the suggestions offered; however, it seems that the Social Services Division of Community Services would be the

appropriate administrative body to assume the leadership in the development of a coordinated community approach. This recommendation is based upon the extensiveness of the services encompassed under this division, together with the general community focus of such services.

Parental Relations with the Educational Process

In a 1960-61 statewide study in Maryland, it was found that 70 percent of the mothers and 80 percent of the fathers of dropouts were themselves dropouts. In studies completed in New York and Louisiana, the findings were that two-thirds of the parents of dropouts held "negative and indifferent attitudes toward the value of education--feeling that the lack of a high school education constituted no serious obstacle to their children's later adjustment or success." (Schreiber, 1963, p. 217)

Does a significant gap exist between those parents of Alaskan native dropouts and the educational process? The analysis of the dropout studies indicates that family related reasons were significantly associated with the decision of a student to leave school.

The studies reviewed which, as a part of the research design, had conducted in-person interviews with the school dropout, asked the students to indicate the reasons they had left school. A number of the responses to this question appeared to be grouped around the general area of "family related problems." Examples of responses considered as relating to this general area of family problems were: "needed at home;" "parents request;" and, "trouble where I lived." The extra-classroom situation, in this case the home, and its impact on learning were not explored and considered directly in these studies; however, the reports of students interviewed strongly point to the necessity for further

consideration of parental relations with the school, and their impact on the dropout problem.

Throughout the nation, the educational pattern is usually one of control of the school by the community. The situation is usually different for Indian, with Indians usually being under-represented on the governing boards of schools. Although there have been recent movements in the direction of more involvement of Indian parents in educational planning and implementation, Spilka concludes, "Still the perception exists that the schools have made virtually no attempt to establish communications with Indian parents and other relatives, let alone give them any advisory role or adopt curricula and methods to their culture." (Spilka, 1970, p. 424)

The Alaska dropout project did not systematically explore the extent to which Alaska native parents were or were not involved with the school in the educational process. However, impressions received from discussions with various educational and welfare leaders tend to indicate that only a beginning has been made in developing meaningful parent-school relations. It should be noted, however, that there is an advisory board for the Alaskan B.I.A. Division of Education, with representation from the areas served. Also, legislation was introduced in the 1973 Alaskan State Legislature which would de-emphasize state level control and allocate monies at the local level for control and development of educational plans and resources. However, the impression still persists that by-and-large, the Alaskan native parent has little direct access to influencing the educational system.

Can parents be expected to be supportive of an educational system of which they know little or nothing about? If the parents are informed,

have opportunities for the expression of concerns and evidence of the actualizing of their ideas, will they become more supportive of the school, and thereby transmit this sense of the importance of education to the child? Based upon the assumption that this premise is indeed true, there has been considerable movement in the direction of developing parent-educator seminars, home visitations by teachers, and support for more local control of schools.

In attempts to bridge the gap between schools and Indian communities, new school programs have been instituted to provide for participation of Indian adults in the development and management of schools. The Rough Rock Demonstration School, at Chinle, Arizona, is one of the most notable of recent efforts to create such a new form of school. This demonstration school and its program are extensively discussed and reviewed by Fuchs and Havighurst in their treatises on American Indian education, To Live on This Earth.

In the Rough Rock demonstration, the operational control of the school was turned over to a board of education consisting of five middle aged Navajos, with very limited formal education. The board was committed to developing a bi-cultural and bi-lingual program. A most innovative dimension of the school included the development of a "parent dormitory program bringing local persons to live in the dormitories with the children; an open-door policy, encouraging visits by community members to the corridors and classrooms; and provided a center for recording and developing Navajo cultural materials." (Fuchs, 1972, p. 253).

The Rough Rock demonstration was the subject of an extensive evaluation carried out by a team of researchers from the University of

Chicago. (Erickson, 1969) The study reported that the programs at Rough Rock were also in force within B.I.A. Schools; that the pupils did not want an emphasis in the curriculum on traditional Navajo life; and, that the academic achievement of Rough Rock students was not significantly different from that of students from other schools of similar size.

In response to the criticism implied in evaluations of Rough Rock, some have said extensive changes in academic achievements are not to be expected in a relatively short period of years, especially when viewed within the context of having developed a new program "nearly from scratch." (Fuchs, 1972, p. 255) Whatever the long-range results may be, it is evident that the Rough Rock demonstration has encouraged new approaches in Indian education--approaches in which the Indian peoples have been meaningfully involved.

Bridging the gap between Alaskan native parents and schools is no overnight process. However, if the home is to be considered as within the proper context of the educational system, parents must be involved. A framework must be established that provides for parents to express their views, while at the same time providing opportunities for the actualization of these ideas and changes within the school themselves.

It is probable that the extreme geographical separation of families from the schools leaves parents with a feeling of being at a loss as to who can adequately represent them in the educational process. How do parents achieve a feeling of involvement and representation with the schools when they are, for all practical purposes, isolated from the school? It would seem that schools should utilize every means at their disposal to involve in the educational process those individuals from the areas served by the school.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

It is fully recognized that the educational pattern of a school, together with the nature of social services provided for individual students, must reflect the individualized concerns and needs of the geographical area served. Therefore, the following recommendations are intended only as guidelines which, it is hoped will aid each school and each community develop the best possible response to its particular needs in respect to the dropout problem. The recommendations are viewed as constituting suggestions as to the basic areas to be considered by both schools, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska, in their efforts to formulate and implement programs and services for the native dropout.

1. It is recommended that each school re-examine curricula and counseling services in reference to the identified needs and problems of the potential Alaskan native dropout, including:
 - a. The availability of a wide variety of curriculum choices for students in order to maximize opportunities for preparation for careers at all levels--manual, technician, business. It has been estimated that only approximately 10 percent of the students enroll in college; however, the school curriculum is largely oriented towards preparation for college.
 - b. The provision of counseling to assist students in a meaningful exploration of occupational choices.
 - c. The inclusion in the curriculum of native history and culture. Primary emphasis in such an effort should be upon assisting the student to recognize and understand his situation and experience in relation to the history of the Alaskan native.

- d. The employment and utilization of Alaskan native teachers and dormitory aides. Due to the small reported number of Alaskan natives with degrees in education, a program of recruitment for native educators may be necessary.
 - e. The immediate availability of counseling for students to assist them in dealing with the "situational crises" identified as having been associated with an "impulsive decision" to leave school. Students who have themselves previously dropped out of school could be effective as a resource in such counseling efforts.
 - f. The establishment of a "half-way" house living arrangement for students who are unable to adjust to the boarding school environment.
 - g. Establishment of procedures for screening of prospective boarding school students, to determine the appropriateness of such an educational placement. It has been noted that sometimes a boarding school has been used as a "correctional placement"--a role it cannot provide.
2. It is recommended that appropriate procedures be developed within the villages to ensure that prospective boarding school students are informed about life in a boarding school, what experiences may be encountered that could lead to dropping out of school, and what resources are available to assist with these problems. B.I.A. social service personnel would be in a strategic position to develop and coordinate such efforts at the village level. Students presently enrolled in boarding schools could provide assistance in such an orientation program.

3. It is recommended that appropriate procedures be developed within the school to ensure that all 15 and 16 year old Alaskan native students are informed about the difficulties and problems a dropout may be likely to confront.
4. It is recommended that the school develop a uniform system for identifying and reporting to appropriate sources, the students who have dropped out of school. Such a reporting system should provide for distribution of the names to B.I.A. agency social service personnel.
5. It is recommended that the school personnel lead-out in developing a "post dropout plan" for students who leave school prematurely.
6. It is recommended that provision be made for establishing contact with each student who is identified as having dropped out of school. This contact need not be by a professional person. Appropriate members of the native council, and social service aides of the village in which the student resides, could be notified by the school and requested to discuss with the student his future educational plans. Also, when indicated, Alaskan native college students could be employed during the summer months to contact students who have dropped out of school.
7. It is recommended that the three division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at both the agency and area levels--Administration, Education, and Community Services--develop an ongoing means for ensuring systematic planning and coordination of their efforts as related to the dropout problem.

8. It is recommended that the Social Services branch of the Community Services Division, B.I.A., assume responsibility for joint planning by governmental and non-governmental people in assessing who will do what, to avoid duplication, and, to identify gaps in coverage of the dropout problem. The recently established Alaska Office of Child Advocacy could be instrumental in leading out in the development of a coordinated effort to deal with the dropout problem.
9. It is recommended that schools give priority to developing meaningful parent-school relations, including:
 - a. Parent-educator seminars.
 - b. Home visitations by teachers.
 - c. An open-door policy of encouraging visits by parents to the schools.
 - d. A parent dormitory program in boarding schools of bringing parents to live in the dormitories with children.
 - e. Bridging the gap between parents and students by:
 - (1) Providing for "telephone conferences" by which parents, the student, and teachers, could jointly discuss identified concerns.
 - (2) Making available cassette tape recorders at the village level, where parents could record a message to be sent to students, and in turn listen to recordings from their children.
 - (3) Provision for taking pictures of students and sending them periodically to the parents.

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